USHMM

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I was born in Italy in May 1943. My name was Yolanda Bass and is now

Gloria Fredkove. I grew up on the lower East Side of New York , my

mother died in 1971 I went to Colorada at about that time, I did

not know anyone there and I had no job to go to. I never felt a strong

sense of roots. I had no relatives in New York. I have a brother who is

11 years older than I am and with whom I am not close. I was 29 when I

left New York. I met and married my husband in Colorado. He was from

St Paul, I have twin boys. We moved to Minnesota and have lived there

since 1975. I am a legal secretary and director of a singing choir.

Recently I joined an animal rights' coalition and have become active in

that group.

There are natural and man made disasters. Of manmade disasters

the Olocaust is the most unique. I understand less ab out it

the more I delve into it. The survivors did whate4ver they had to

to survive, luck, intuition, suicide, whatever they had to.

My grandparents are ultra orthodox Jews from Poland. They had five children

My mother was the youngest. She was a rebel of an artisitc nature, she

wanted to be a singer. She left home when she was in university. She

married in 1931, had a child the next year and a year later, her husband

died.

My mother did not tell much about the Holocaust. My mother was in France

and made her living by singing in nightclubs. My mother was born

in Switzerland and left for France. When it became too dangerous in

France, she left for Italy. She lost contact with her siblings. They

all died in concentration camps. After the war she tried to locate

them but could not find them. My grandparets, my mother, brother and I

were the only surviovors. My mother spoke, French, Italian

Yiddish and could understand German. This was a tool to survive. My mother

was in prison in Italy for five days and in detention camps in Iraly.

Survivors children block out much information that they receive. I did

that and now do not remember much of what she told me. I had a sister

who was adoptedbut she didnt discuss this much. In 1945

when we came to this country, mother was pregnant and gave birth in

a shelter in Oswego. They rushed her to the hospital after she

arrived. Her health was very poor. She had a weak heart . We had no

relatives in this country. They found an apartment for us on the third floor

of an apartment house, walk up. She could harsdly make it up the stairs.

Public assistance helped us also Jewish agencies gave us clothes. It was

a ghetto like life. We left there when I was ten years old because they were

building a project there. We were sent to another project. People

ostracized us and we felt very isolated My brother quit school in the

8th grade and hustled as a peddlar on the streets and turned to gambling.

He is 58 years old has had 3 failed marriages and is now married to a

nice woman and has said he has given up gambling.

In the project we were labeled refugees in a negative way. My mother was

beat. I became the mother and tried to help her. I took on her pain,

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QWhat about religion.

My mother came from an orthodox home and she was a rebel but she did

believe in God. As I became older I had more faith. My husband

had a German mother and Jewish father and was raised Jewish.

We are conservative with a liberal bend.

Q How many children were there on the boat over.

Only 2 or 3 babies.

How did your reluctance to talk about the Ho locaust affect you?

I voulf not discuss the Holocaust with the outside worldand the

mystery about my father, enraged me. I believed that God chose us

to survive and we felt guilt for surviving. I felt I had not suffered

as much as other survivers and other children of survivors and that

gave guilt. I went to a meeting of children of survivors

where I felt very comfortable and talked about some of the issues

of being a child of a survivor. I went to a support group for 8

weeks. Its like finding a connection. It is not a normal life.

I hope my children when they are older will go to this group.

Survivors were allowed to survive to be witnesses.

(very poor sound and couldnt hear one question or answer)

If we discuss our sufferings then it waters down the suffering of

the real survivors of camps. There are children who do not want

to talk about it. They want to think of themselves as Americans only.

I never discussed my background until I hwas in my 20s and then to

a select few.

Do you feel any real anger.

Yes As a child I saw the newsreel in the movie theater

showing the horrible scenes in the camps. I was extreemly

angry. How could this happen. How could anyone let it happen.

I thought it was an isolated case in one camps. I cannot

read a whole book on the Holocaust.

My brother's problems were the result of the Holocaust. Not understandiong

it and his anger were the center of his problems. I think he had a lot

of anger and no support system. My mother opposed my having

therapy. My brother never went.

Have you thought of writing it down

I wrote everything out for this talk. It was painful for me and

I relived it. I have thought about writing a book about my experiences.

I have written poems. I do not know if it is dramatic enough/

Mayvbe I will write it for my own use. When we get a word processor

I will put it down as oral histories for my children.

My mother thought America was the greatest. Even though we were on

public assistance because her health was so bad, she did take care

of children parttime and did other things. My brother also felt

the U.S. was great and was grateful that they took us in.

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I did not know anything about my father. She met him in Italy, she said

he had a Jewish father and that he was in the army. They weremarried

in a Jewish ceremony, not a legal one. I know nothing about my father.

She said he died. I have had a lot of therapy with this. I felt I was

a victim of the Holocaust as a survivor . I felt sorry for myself,

and guilty of being here because so many died and so many had a much

more difficult time in the camps. Now I feel that the people who

did not help me should feel guilty and ashamed .

I met a friend of mine in Milwaukee who showed me a picture

of myself, my mother and brother in a book entitled HAVEN

by Ruth Gruber, in which the story of WW2 refugees' stories were

told. I learned a lot about myself from this book. I

contacted Ruth Gruber and went to see hert in her apartment

and through her met many people who were on the boat we came over

on and who knew me as a baby.

My mother loved this country and she wanted me to have an American

name and changed it to Gloria. When I became a citizen

in 1961/62 I changed my name legally .

When we came here on th4e boat6 President Roosevelt passed a resolution

that we would be here, 1000 refugees , until the end of the war. We

represented 18 countries who found ourselves in Italy in August 1944.

3000 people applied and only 1000 were selected. Mother, grandmother,

my brother and I. Truman changed the resolution and allowed us to stay.

My mother wrote a statement about her experience and Ruth Gruber

gave that statement to me. It contained most of the things

my mother told me. (She read it very rapidly)

I tried to locate my sister Susanah. The Jewish Agency in Buffalo

put me in contact with the adoptive father. He wrote me that

she died 9 years ago in her late 20s. Part of me doesnt believe

it. I have not persued it.

The Holocaust has made me lose my identity, my family, loss of innocence, I

had no childhood. I felt more comfortable with older people.

I missed out on my childhood. I am lucky to have a husband so understandikng.

The Holocaust was produced by ani Semitism. Hitler was eveil but he

had a long list of supporting players who helped him, doctors,

scientists, college educated people like yourselves Anti Semitism has

not ended with Hitler. Jews have been scapegoats for centuries. People

are afraid of differences and this fear can produce prejudice. We are

all prejudiced. It is up to us to deal with it.

Questions: What do you tell your kids about the Holocaust.

I have not told tyhem too much. Their attention wanders.

They are 15. They know the basic situation. When they are older

they will have more information than I had.